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The Textual History of the *Rāṣṭrapālāpariprcchā*: Notes on its Third-Century Chinese Translation

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This paper is but a brief prospectus of a larger, ongoing study of an early Mahāyāna sūtra, the *Rāṣṭrapālāpariprcchā*. My interest in this text stems both from its provocative content and from the availability of an early Chinese translation that promises to tell us much about its Indian history. I will sketch some of the more interesting features of the text as well as note some of the data from the earliest Chinese translation that provide evidence for the shape of the Indian text in the late third century.

The extant materials for research on the *Rāṣṭrapāla* are manifold. A seventeenth-century Nepalese Sanskrit manuscript, edited in 1901 by Louis Finot,¹ may now be supplemented by additional, albeit still very late, manuscripts from the German-Nepali Preservation Project. It is my intention to reedit the Sanskrit text in light of these new manuscripts as well as our better understanding today of the nature of Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit. The early ninth-century Tibetan translation was edited nearly fifty years ago by Jacob Ensink as an appendix to his English translation of the Sanskrit,² but his edition could hardly be called critical by the standards of today's Kanjur studies. All four of his textual representatives derive from the *Tshal pa* or Eastern recension branch. Thus a new edition that takes advantage of the *Them spangs ma* or Western representatives would be an obvious desideratum.³ We also have at our disposal three Chinese translations. The earliest, by the third-century Yuezhi monk Dharmarakṣa, has often not been

I would like to thank Prof. Jan Nattier for her judicious comments on an earlier draft of this paper. Her suggestions, large and small, have done much to make this a better paper, and when I have failed to adopt them, I fear that I have done so at my own peril.

¹Finot 1901. For a review of Finot's edition, see La Vallée Poussin 1903.

²Ensink 1952. Reviews of Ensink's edition and translation can be found in de Jong 1953, Edgerton 1953, Ch'en 1954, and Shackleton Bailey 1954. The overall conclusions of these reviewers point to the desirability of a new translation of this important work.

recognized by Western scholars as a translation of the *Rāṣṭrapāla*.⁴ The sūtra was retranslated in the late sixth century by Jñānagupta⁵ and again in the late tenth century by Dānapāla.⁶ We have then a considerable variety of witnesses to the shape of the *Rāṣṭrapāla* over some fourteen centuries.

The Indian Text

Many of the major concerns of the *Rāṣṭrapāla* show it to be closely allied with a significant strand of early Mahāyāna literature, namely, the sharp criticism of sedentary monasticism and the elevation of ascetically-inclined forest dwellers.⁷ This strand has been encapsulated perhaps most clearly and succinctly in a recent article by Paul Harrison:

Far from being the products of an urban, lay, devotional movement, many Mahāyāna sūtras give evidence of a hard-core ascetic attempt to return to the original inspiration of Buddhism, the search for Buddhahood or awakened cognition. . . . they also display a strong and positive emphasis on the *dhuta-guṇas* (extra ascetic practices) and *araṇya-vāsa* (dwelling in the forest or jungle), which is surely rather strange in the documents of a supposedly lay-dominated movement (Harrison 1995, 65).

³Work on the recensional history of Kanjur texts has made rapid advancement in recent years, due notably to the work of scholars such as Helmut Eimer and Paul Harrison, among others. For an overview of the significance of this work, see Eimer 1992; Harrison 1992a and 1992b.

⁴*Deguang taizi jing* 德光太子經, T 170, 4.412a-418c. Most of the studies in the West, including Ensink's translation, have not been cognizant of this early translation. In Japan, T 170 has been recognized as a translation of the *Rāṣṭrapāla* at least since Itō 1938. De Jong also drew our attention to the importance of this early translation in his 1953 review of Ensink independently of Itō, whose work he had not seen (cf. de Jong 1967, 3, n. 3).

⁵Jñānagupta's text occurs within the *Mahāratnakūṭa* anthology in the Taishō edition as *Huguo pusa hui* 護國菩薩會, T 310.18, 11.457b-472b.

⁶*Huguo zunzhe suowen dasheng jing* 護國尊者所問大乘經, T 321, 12.1a-14c.

⁷More precisely, this is a critique which permeates the entire history of Indian Buddhism, being co-opted in particular ways by some compilers of Mahāyāna sūtras. In an interesting though not unproblematic monograph on this theme, Reginald Ray notes: "These 'Mahāyāna' forest texts do not present their kind of Buddhism as anything new. Instead, they see it as simply a continuation of the normative forest ideal established by the Buddha in the beginning, which they understand as his highest teaching. For them, this is the original bodhisattva Buddhism, and they understand it as nothing other than original Buddhism in its most quintessential form" (Ray 1994, 407). This point has also been made by Jonathan Silk in his recent study of another *Mahāratnakūṭa* text, the *Ratnarāśi* (Silk 1994). For example, in Chapter Three of his study (69-96), Silk discusses numerous passages from the *Ratnarāśi* and related texts that elevate the practice of the *dhuta-guṇas*, and here, particularly, the wearing of the refuse rag robe, to be emblematic of the serious renunciant.

Be that as it may, few early Mahāyāna sūtras rail quite like the *Rāṣṭrapāla*. The author and/or compiler of this text repeatedly characterizes his contemporaries as given to arrogance, envy, conceit, and pride. Such monks constantly engage in backbiting of their fellow recluses while shamelessly soliciting wealthy patrons in towns and villages. Indeed, our author tells us:

A householder is not as covetous with passions as these [corrupt monks] are after going forth. They would have wives, sons, daughters just like a householder.

At which house they are favored with robes, alms, and requisites, they are desirous of the [householder's] wife, for these ignoble ones are always under the power of defilements.⁸

What makes such behavior by these monks all the more reprehensible, he continues, is their hypocrisy:

They always say to householders: "These passions are not to be followed; they will cause you to fall into the realm of animals, of the pretas, or to the hells." And yet, they themselves are undisciplined and without composure.⁹

Such corrupt monks are said to regularly fawn after the laity, exacting alms and seeking prestige through trickery and boasting. Even within the monastery these monks are said to be no less self-serving. Forsaking meditation and study, they busy themselves with monastery affairs.¹⁰ They reserve dwellings and materials for their companions, meanwhile turning away virtuous monks.¹¹ And perhaps most damning, they make no distinctions in the property belonging to the saṅgha, to the Buddha (i.e., the stūpa), or to individuals.¹²

If our author's description of his fellow monks seems harsh, he is no less reticent in having the Buddha predict the ultimate consequences of their behavior:

⁸Finot 29.11-14: *grddho grhī na tathā kāmair yādr̥ṣe pravrajitva te grddhāḥ / bhāryāḥ sūtā duhitaraś ca teṣu bhaviṣya grhisamānaḥ // yatraiva satkṛta kule te cīvarapiṇḍapātāparibhogaiḥ / tasyaiva dāraparigrddhā kleśavaśānugāḥ sada anāryāḥ //* I follow Ensink in reading *grhī na* instead of *grhīna* in the first pāda of the first verse.

⁹Finot 29.15-16: *kāmā ime khalu na sevyāḥ prātana tiryakpretanirayeṣu / vaksyanti te sada grhīnāḥ te ca svayam adānta anupaśāntāḥ //*

¹⁰Finot 31.1-2: *dhyānaṃ tathādhyayanaṃ tyaktvā nitya vihāra karmaṇi niyuktāḥ / āvasagrāhrabhṛkuṭikāś te ca adāntaśiṣyaparivārāḥ //* (Having given up meditation and study, they are always engaged in the affairs of the monastery. Desirous of dwellings, scowling [at others], they are surrounded by undisciplined pupils.)

This teaching of mine, a treasure of virtue, the source of all good qualities, that which is most delightful, will now pass away to destruction on account of the failure of morality and the sins of envy and pride.¹³

Such a destruction of the dharma occurs during the dreadful final period. And these undisciplined monks will cause the ruin of this teaching of mine.¹⁴

One can see in these few citations, which could be easily multiplied, that the tone throughout is severe and ascerbic. But I should note here also that this vitriol is not specifically directed at *śrāvaka-yānists*. This is not, in other words, a Mahāyāna critique of the so-called “Lesser Vehicle.” The author is clear that these very pitfalls also await the bodhisattva who lets his guard down, is slothful, or who remains uncommitted to enlightenment.¹⁵ Instead, these criticisms are directed at monks of all stripes, perceived to be all too complacent in the comforts of monastery life.¹⁶

We must agree, I think, with Finot in seeing these charges--all too graphic and precise--as reflecting real conditions known to and, in all probability, affecting the author or subsequent editor(s) of the text. As we learn more about the social and economic life of Indian monasteries, due in no small measure to the recent studies on

¹¹Finot 31.3-6: *na ca karmiko hy ahaṃ vihāre ātmanahetur eṣa hi kṛto me / ye bhikṣavo mamānukūlās teṣv avakāśam asti hi vihāre // ye śīlavanta guṇavanto dharmadharā janārtham abhiyuktāḥ / damasaṃnyame satata yuktāḥ saṃgraha teṣu te na kurute ca //* ([Thinking] “I am not a menial laborer for the monastery; it [the monastery] was made for my sake. There will be room in the monastery for those monks who are favorable toward me.” Those who are endowed with good conduct and good qualities, who preserve the Dharma, diligent for the sake of mankind, who are always disciplined in self-control and restraint, to them they show no favor.)

¹²Finot 29.7-8: *naiṣāṃ anāryaṃ api vācyaṃ naiva ca kiṃcid asti yad akāryaṃ / stauṇḍhikā saṃghikā hy api ca vittaṃ paudgalikāṃ ca tac ca samam eṣāṃ //* (There is nothing to them [i.e., corrupt monks] that is ignoble or reproachable; nothing that is prohibited. What belongs to the stūpa, to the saṃgha, and what is acquired for oneself is all the same to them.)

¹³Finot 32.1-2: *ima śāśanaṃ guṇanidhānaṃ sarvagūṇākaraṃ paramaramyaṃ / nāśaṃ prayāsyati mameha śīlavipatti-r-īrśyamadoṣaiḥ //*

¹⁴Finot 32.5-6: *etādṛśaś carimakāle dharmavilopa varttati sughore / ta cāpi bhikṣava adāntā nāśayitāra śāśanaṃ mamedam //*

¹⁵In the opening to Chapter Two (Finot 34.1-36.14), the author/editor charges some of his coreligionists, those following the bodhisattva career (*bodhisattvayāniya*), with being deceitful (*śaṭha*), fond of worldly goods (*āmiṣapriya*), selfish with regard to a family [of regular patrons] (*kulamatsara*), hypocritical (*kuhaka*), covetous of good reputation (*jñātraguru*), etc.--all faults which obstruct the path toward enlightenment.

¹⁶For this reason, it is important not to mistake the pro-forest position of the *Rāṣṭrapāla* as an anti-monastic stance, as Ray occasionally does in his 1994 monograph (see esp. 260-66 for his discussion of the *Rāṣṭrapāla*). It is almost certain that forest *bhikṣus* must have had ongoing relationships, however intermittent and ambivalent, with a monastery and its settled inhabitants. Otherwise the criticisms make little sense: why trouble yourself with corrupt individuals who have no influence on you or your associates?

the *Mūlasarvāstivāda-vinaya* by Gregory Schopen, our author's complaints become a little easier to understand. If what Schopen has termed the Middle Period of Indian Buddhism, roughly the first half of the first millennium, can be characterized by a highly organized, sedentary monasticism with a complex administration governed by an equally complex legal system, and if the monks living in these monasteries were bound in a tangled web of relationships to lay donors and their fellow monks, relationships that required the constant negotiation of property rights and ritual obligations, then the strident objections of the *Rāṣṭrapāla* are not only understandable, but almost predictable.¹⁷ The *Rāṣṭrapāla*, and other Mahāyāna sūtras participating in this "renunciant" genre, may well reflect minority voices crying out for the good old days, a time when life was simpler if more rigorous, when public expectations of monks were few.

In such a context, we might expect that the strident criticisms of the *Rāṣṭrapāla* would not have been well received by many of the author's contemporaries. Indeed, in what is a striking interpolation within a Mahāyāna sūtra, the editor of the extant Sanskrit text lets slip the fact that his teacher--and his teacher's teacher--called the very authenticity of the *Rāṣṭrapāla* into question:

My teacher was an ocean of knowledge, very learned, the best of expounders [of the dharma]. And yet this [sūtra] was forbidden by him, for (he said) it was by no means the word of the Buddha.

Moreover, he also had an aged teacher, possessed of an unlimited abundance of virtues, and this [sūtra] was also not accepted by him: "Do not apply yourself to it; it is false."¹⁸

Mahāyāna sūtra compilers regularly allude to the fact that their contemporaries refused to accept such texts as *buddhavacana*, often ridiculing those who circulated them.¹⁹ But this passage above from the *Rāṣṭrapāla* is extraordinary in that it demonstrates that a later

¹⁷Cf. Schopen 1995a, 477: "Unless we know what landed, institutional monastic Buddhism had become when Mahāyāna sūtras were being written, it is difficult to understand the attacks on 'abuses' associated with sedentary monasticism found most stridently in Mahāyāna texts like the *Rāṣṭrapālapariprecchā*; it is also difficult to understand similar, if less shrill, criticisms in Mahāyāna texts like the *Kāśyapa-parivarta*, or the constant calls in such texts to return to a life in the forest, or why long sections of the *Samādhirāja-sūtra* are given over to extolling ascetic practices, and why the necessity and value of these same practices is a topic of sharp debate in the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā*."

¹⁸Finot 28.7-10: *ācāryo me śrutasaṃudro āsi bahuśrutaḥ kathikaśreṣṭhaḥ / tenāpi caīṣa pratiśiddho buddhavaco hi naiṣa tu kathamcit //* *parato 'py abhūd api ca vṛddhaḥ tasya guruḥ sa amitaguṇaughah / tenāpi naiṣa hi grhīto mātra prayujyatha vitatham etat //* On the reading *amitagūṇaughah* (MS: *sāmita-*), see Shackleton Bailey 1954, 81; Tibetan reads *dpag med yon tan*.

editor or compiler, already circulating some primitive version of the *Rāṣṭrapāla*, had difficulties convincing his personal teacher of its validity. In this regard it seems difficult to assume, as some have tried, that exponents of Mahāyāna sūtras--those who authored the texts as well as those who circulated or recited them--lived in entirely separate dwellings from their Mainstream (i.e., *śrāvakayānika*) confreres. Indeed, this passage confirms what has by now become a consensus among Western scholars: monasteries in classical India--and here we mean roughly Schopen's Middle Period (ca. 0-500 CE)--were multifarious places, housing individuals of different persuasions and spiritual orientations.²⁰ Needless to say, such cohabitation was not always harmonious.

Even assuming some exaggeration on the part of the author or editor of the *Rāṣṭrapāla*, it is clear that Buddhist monasteries in his day had become intimate parts of the religious, social, and economic lives of many Indian towns and villages. Dating these criticisms then from the *Rāṣṭrapāla*--and by extension the circumstances to which they respond--would be of some value for the history of Indian religions generally and for Buddhist monasticism, not to mention Mahāyāna literature, specifically. Here we are dependent upon the Chinese translations for fixing more precise dates to developments within the text. And we are particularly fortunate in this case to have an early translation by the Yuezhi translator-monk Dharmarakṣa.

Dharmarakṣa's Third-Century Chinese Translation

Dharmarakṣa was born at Dunhuang, where his family had been settled for

¹⁹Cf. Finot 28.3-6: *hāsyu bhaviṣyati ima śruṇitvā śāsanam etad eva ca tadānīm / āhāramaithunaparāś te middhasadābhībhūta śathadhvāṅkṣāḥ // dharmadvīṣaḥ sada anāryāḥ śāsanadūṣakā guṇavihināḥ / śrutvā ca dharmam ima śāntaṃ naiṣa jinokta ity abhivadanti //* (There will be laughter when these contemptuous rogues--concerned with nothing but food and sex and always overcome by sloth--hear this teaching at that time. These ignoble ones, who are hostile to the Dharma, who offend against the teaching, and who are devoid of good qualities, declare that it is not spoken by the Victorious One when they hear this tranquil Dharma.) For the last compound of the first verse, Finot reads *śatakāṅkṣāḥ* (those possessed of hundreds of doubts), though in a note he indicates that the MS reads *-dhvāṅkṣāḥ*. The Tibetan confirms the above reading: *khva liar g.yo ngan 'gyur* (lit. "deceitful like a crow").

²⁰The scholar who is perhaps the most notable in consistently arguing for the institutional independence of those first identifying themselves as bodhisattvas is Akira Hirakawa; see Hirakawa 1957; 1963; 1989-90, esp. 108 ff.; 1990, 270-74. Hirakawa's opinion is, of course, directly connected to his view that the first Mahāyāna adherents were located among groups of lay followers, particularly those who congregated in the vicinity of Buddhist stūpas. For a critique of Hirakawa's views on this question, see Schopen 1975; Silk 1994, esp. 2-51; Sasaki 1995, 1997; Jan Nattier has a forthcoming study and translation of the *Ugraparipṛcchā-sūtra* which will also discuss Hirakawa's theories in detail vis-à-vis this text. For alternative opinions, especially those recognizing that monks of different persuasions cohabitated in the same monasteries, see Bechert 1973; Harrison 1995; Mitsuhashi 1996.

generations, and studied there under an Indian teacher during the second quarter of the third century. He was the most prolific of the early translators, rendering over 150 texts into Chinese over a forty year career.²¹ His translation of the *Rāṣṭrapāla*, dated to the year 270, stands out as one of the earliest of his works as well as one of the few for which there is an extant Sanskrit version. I would like to suggest here two ways in which Dharmarakṣa's translation may provide important clues about an earlier state of the Indic text.

Composition and Structure

First, the composition of Dharmarakṣa's translation differs significantly from our extant Sanskrit manuscripts, Tibetan translation, and later Chinese translations. There are numerous passages and whole sections which have no parallel in his third-century translation. These missing sections can be charted in outline as follows (numbers refer to page and line of Finot's edition):

Chapter 1:

- I. 1.7-4.19 (verses eulogizing the Buddha)
- II. 5.7-8.6 (*Rāṣṭrapāla*'s verses in praise of the Buddha)
- III. 10.10-11.2; 11.6-17; 12.4-15; 13.4-15; 14.2-12; 15.1-8; 17.7-17; 18.6-16; 19.4-15; 20.1-10; 20.16-21.8 (verses recapitulating the various sets of the four kinds of dharmas)
- IV. 21.9-27.18 (allusions to 50 *jātaka*)
- V. 28.1-33.6 (reproaches of corrupt *bhikṣus*)

Chapter 2:

- VI. 37.13-39.7 (verses by Śuddhāvāsakāyika gods to Puṇyaraśmi)
- VII. 50.7-53.18 (verses by Puṇyaraśmi eulogizing the Buddha Siddhārthabuddhi)
- VIII. 54.12-56.2 (verses by King Arciṣmat eulogizing Siddhārthabuddhi)

Missing parts of Chapter One include stanzas eulogizing buddhas, verses recapitulating prose descriptions of the virtues and pitfalls of the bodhisattva career, a large set of verses detailing the Buddha's heroic efforts as a bodhisattva during fifty of his former

²¹For a fuller account of Dharmarakṣa's life and translation career, see Zürcher 1959, 65-70; Tsukamoto/Hurvitz 1985, 193-230; Boucher 1996, 22-43.

lives,²² and a section containing the most strident reproaches of monastic corruption. Missing from Chapter Two are three sets of verse recapitulations of interactions between the bodhisattva Puṇyaraśmi and the Buddha Siddhārthabuddhi. In all, approximately 50% of our extant Sanskrit recension is not represented in our earliest Chinese translation. Most noticeably omitted are some 248 of 353 verses, reminding us that the often assumed historical priority of metrical sections in Mahāyāna sūtras may need to be qualified.²³ Many of the strongest criticisms of the Sanskrit text--invective aimed at arrogant and greedy monks who usher in the imminent destruction of the dharma--are missing, giving Dharmarakṣa's version of the *Rāṣṭrapāla* a decidedly less caustic tone.

Given our current state of knowledge about the earliest period of Mahāyāna sūtra literature, it may still be premature to assume that Dharmarakṣa's translation represents a kind of Ur text to which accretions were subsequently added. But with Jñānagupta's Chinese translation of the late sixth century, the *Rāṣṭrapāla* appears to undergo fewer changes by the time of its ninth-century Tibetan translation, its tenth-century Chinese translation by Dānapāla, and its much later Nepalese Sanskrit manuscripts.²⁴ The crucial period then for understanding significant developments in the history of the text can be placed roughly between 270 and 550 C.E., corresponding approximately to the Indian Gupta period. We should expect then that further research will enable us to corroborate some of these developments with changes in Gupta-period Buddhism.²⁵

Dharmarakṣa's Source Text

Secondly, Dharmarakṣa's translation may also inform us about the language of his

²²On the *jātaka* tales recorded in the Sanskrit *Rāṣṭrapāla*, see Okada 1991 and 1993. Okada 1991 provides an extensive list of parallel *jātakas* from other Buddhist literature.

²³Cf. de Jong 1977 with regard to the textual history of the *Kāśyapaparivarta*: "The *Kāśyapaparivarta*, in which the verse parts are later than the prose parts, offers an interesting example of a text in which the verses, written in Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit, are definitely later than the prose parts, the language of which is much closer to standard Sanskrit" (255).

²⁴This is not to say, however, that there are no significant differences between the versions post-dating Dharmarakṣa's translation. A detailed account of those differences will be provided in my fuller study and translation.

²⁵Gregory Schopen has led the way toward appreciating the important developments of this typically underappreciated period of Indian Buddhism. His work, particularly on the *Mūlasarvāstivāda-vinaya*, has attempted to demonstrate, successfully in my opinion, that much of what we today think of as classical Indian Buddhist monasticism developed only in this Middle Period (ca. 0-500 CE), and not, as commonly asserted, in the generations immediately following the death of the Buddha. See, for example, Schopen 1994; 1995b; 1996.

underlying Indic manuscript. Most valuable in this regard is the evidence for misreadings of his Indic text that suggest confusions in the Chinese rendering which cannot be described as free or loose interpretations of an Indic locution. That is to say, these are instances where Dharmarakṣa's translation departs from our extant Sanskrit and Tibetan versions in ways that are neither predictable nor in most cases even sensible. Because of the multiple problems involved in discerning the relationship between the extant Chinese translations and their underlying Indic source texts, I will focus here only on a few examples that appear to reflect graphically-induced misreadings of an Indic text, misreadings which allow us to discern the underlying script of Dharmarakṣa's source text.

The first example is drawn from the middle of the first chapter in a set of verses recapitulating the ways in which a bodhisattva may purify his course toward enlightenment:

Finot 16.15-16: *pratipadati*²⁶ *yathā ca bodhimārge sa tu pariśodhayate sadāśayaṃ ca /
dhāraṇīpratilābham eṣamāṇaḥ sabati ca duḥkhasatāṃ guṇābhikāṅkṣī //*
(As he sets out on the path to enlightenment, he always purifies his intentions. Seeking the obtainment of *dhāraṇīs*, one who desires good qualities endures hundreds of afflictions.)

Dh 413a.5-6: 假使得佛覺道意 常為清淨無疑難
總持辯才一其心 忍一切苦不想報
(If he obtains the aspiration for enlightenment, he will always be pure, without doubts or difficulties. With *dhāraṇīs* and eloquence he unifies his mind and endures all miseries without thinking of recompense.)

As one notices immediately, there are a number of problems in Dharmarakṣa's rendering here, not all of which are easily explainable. The phrase I would like to call to attention here is in *pāda* c, *dhāraṇīpratilābham eṣamāṇaḥ*, "seeking the obtainment of *dhāraṇīs*," rendered by Dharmarakṣa as "with *dhāraṇīs* and eloquence he unifies his mind." First, it would appear that Dharmarakṣa's Indic manuscript read *-pratibhānam*, "eloquence," or as Graeme MacQueen terms it, "inspired speech," instead of *pratilābham*.²⁷ Dharmarakṣa's reading, moreover, is confirmed by the Tibetan and Jñānagupta's translation.²⁸ More problematic, however, is Dharmarakṣa's misconstrual of *eṣamāṇaḥ*, a present middle

²⁶MS reads *prativadasi*. Ensink (1952, 17, n. 89) reads *pratipadati*, largely on the basis of the Tibetan translation (*sgrub byed*).

²⁷On the term *pratibhāna* in Mahāyāna sūtra literature, see MacQueen 1981 and 1982.

participle, as seemingly *eka-manas*, “of one mind, concentrated.” Certainly these two words are not semantically confusable, but if we assume Dharmarakṣa to have been reading a *kharoṣṭhī* manuscript, then it is not impossible that he could have confused some later forms of the *akṣara ka* 𑀓 with those of *ṣa* 𑀅. This would have been especially likely if his *ka* resembled the later form found on such inscriptions as the Wardak Vase and in some of the recently discovered *kharoṣṭhī* manuscripts held in British Library.²⁹ Such a misreading, to say the least, wreaks havoc with the resulting translation.

A second example is drawn from early in the second chapter, where the faults of those who claim to follow the bodhisattva career are enumerated at length. The Buddha contrasts these shortcomings with his own exertion and heroic sacrifices during former lives. To illustrate his former commitment to the dharma, the Buddha declares:

Finot 36.11: *mahāprapātaṃ jvalitaṃ butāśanaṃ subhāṣitārthe patito ‘smi pūrve /*
śrutvā ca tasmīn pratipattiye sthito vibhāya sarvāṇi priyāpriyāṇi //
 (Formerly I fell into a great abyss that was ablaze and on fire for the
 sake of the well-spoken [doctrine]. After listening to it and
 relinquishing all that is dear and disliked, I was established in good
 conduct.)

Dh 414a.4: 有大燈明無能見 我本求索善義說
 適聞所教即奉行 斷絕一切諸愛欲
 (There was a great illumination which was unable to be seen [sic!]; I
 formerly sought the superb and righteous doctrine. Just as I heard
 the teaching, so I put it into practice, cutting off all desires.)

Clearly Dharmarakṣa did not see the first *pāda* as the object of the verb *patito ‘smi* (I fell). This may have contributed to his misreading *butāśanaṃ*, literally “oblation-eater,” thus “fire,” as *wuneng jian* 無能見 (unable to be seen). If Dharmarakṣa was unfamiliar with this Indian metaphor, it is not inconceivable that he could have read the initial *bu-* 𑀧 in a *kharoṣṭhī* manuscript as *a-* 𑀅, which, with normal Prakritic voicing of the intervocalic dental, would have led him to recite the text as *a-da(r)śanaṃ* (invisible).³⁰

²⁸The Tibetan reads *gzungs dang spobs pa tshol bar byed pa na* (Ensink 1952, 75.19) and Jñānagupta (T310.18, 12.460c.3) reads 求陀羅尼及辯才 (“seeking *dhāraṇī*s and eloquence”).

²⁹For the Wardak Vase inscription, see Konow 1929, 165-70 and esp. plate XXXIII (e.g., line 1, *Kamagulyapu[tra]* and line 3, *avaśaḍ(r)igana*). Some of the British Library manuscripts use, albeit only intermittently, the later form of *ka* with a stroke curving from top to lower right; see Salomon 1999, 116-17 and Salomon 2000, 63.

In a final example, also from the beginning of Chapter Two, the Buddha elucidates the karmic consequences that indolent, conceited monks can expect:

Finot 35.19-20: *apāyabbhūmim gatim akṣaṇeṣu daridrātām nīcakulopapattim /
jātyandhadaurbalyam*³¹ *athālpasthāmatām grhṇanti te mānavaśeṇa
mūḍbhāḥ //*

(These fools, on account of their arrogance, will be subject to an evil state, a destiny among inopportune rebirths, poverty, and rebirth in a lowly family; they will be blind from birth and weak, having little strength.)

Dh 413c.21-22: 不見道住隨亂行 生於貧窮卑賤家
在醜惡中無力勢 墮於貢高愚癡地

(Not seeing the stage of enlightenment, they follow corrupt practices and are born in a poor and lowly family, into an ugly state, without strength. They fall on account of their conceit to the level of stupidity.)

Once again there are several syntactical problems that make Dharmarakṣa's rendering difficult to understand. For our purposes, I will only note the possibility that the initial *apāya-* may have been read as *apaś(y)a-*, "not seeing," given the very close graphic similarity between late forms of the *kharoṣṭhī ya* 𑀧 and *śa* 𑀧 . These *akṣaras* in fact are often nearly indistinguishable in records dating from the beginning of the Common Era.³² There are other examples elsewhere in this text as well as in other translations by Dharmarakṣa that exhibit this same confusion between *ya* and *śa*.³³

These examples are by no means unambiguous, but they do demonstrate that Dharmarakṣa had great difficulties in reading his Indic manuscript of the *Rāṣṭrapāla*. We are not dealing here in most cases with true textual variants, although obviously Dharmarakṣa's text looked quite different than the Sanskrit version that has come down to us. In fact, passages like those cited above strongly suggest that a number of the

³⁰This confusion assumes that the *hu-* in Dharmarakṣa's manuscript had been damaged or that the vowel *mātra* and right arm at the base of the *akṣara* were indistinct. There may be an analogue for this in the recently edited Gāndhārī **Khargaviṣaṇa-sūtra*, in which one instance of a *ha akṣara* closely approximates the form of the unmarked vowel *a*; see Salomon 2000, 70.

³¹Here the Tibetan reads *mdog ngan pa* (*durvaṇam*), confirming Dharmarakṣa's *zai chou e zhong* 在醜惡中, "into an ugly condition." Jñānagupta's *e se* 惡色 ("of bad appearance") would also seem to support this reading.

³²On the close graphic similarity of these two *akṣaras* in *kharoṣṭhī* records from the first century C.E., see Konow 1929, cxxiii; Rapson and Noble 1929, 308; Fussman 1989, 465; Salomon 1998a, 55; and Salomon 1999, 116-17.

translation infelicities within Dharmarakṣa's translation of the *Rāṣṭrapāla* can best be explained as misreadings of a *kharoṣṭhī* manuscript.

This supposition, however, requires some immediate caveats. First, evidence for an underlying *kharoṣṭhī* manuscript is not necessarily evidence for an Indic text in Gāndhārī Prakrit, as has been presumed by some scholars. It is entirely possible, as I have suggested elsewhere, that a Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit manuscript could have been transmitted in *kharoṣṭhī* script, as evidenced by Niya documents 510, 511, and 523 as well as by fragments brought to light more recently from the Pelliot and Schøyen collections.³⁴ Given the absence of Mahāyāna texts in the recently acquired British Library *kharoṣṭhī* manuscripts, our most significant find of Gāndhārī Buddhist literature in a century, it is likely that a careful use of the early Chinese translations will go a long way toward filling out our knowledge of Buddhist literature originating from--or at least transmitted through--northwest India and eastern Afghanistan.

The Translation Process

Additionally, we must never lose sight of the problems affecting the production of these texts in China, particularly during the translation process itself. We know from

³³For a detailed discussion of one such example from Dharmarakṣa's translation of the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka-sūtra*, see Boucher 1998, 499-500 and Boucher 2000, 12-14. There are two other examples of possible misapprehensions of *kharoṣṭhī* *ya/śa* in the *Rāṣṭrapāla*, though both are somewhat more ambiguous. The first occurs at Finot 14.14-15: *prāntaśāyāsanābhiraṭiḥ sā ca lābhasatkārānapekṣatayā* (takes pleasure in beds and seats in [secluded] border regions on account of his indifference to profit and honor). Dharmarakṣa renders this as follows (4.412c.9-10): 樂受教命其心不著財利 (happy to receive decrees, his thoughts are not attached to wealth or benefits). Obviously something is seriously amiss here. Dharmarakṣa's *shou* 受 seems to have confused *prānta-* with *prāpta* (< *pratta*, Gdh. *prata*) and his *jiaoming* (teachings, decrees) may have been the result of a mistaken reading [*śa*]*śāsana* (teaching), which also appears in the Gāndhārī *Dharmapada* as *śaśaṇa* (cf. Brough 1962, vv. 69, 70, 77, 123, and 258). Another, also ambiguous example can be found at Finot 34.11: *iha śāsane tuṣṭim utpādayisyanti* (they will take pleasure in the doctrine here [only for profit]). Dharmarakṣa reads (4.413b.17-18): 其所在處不能得安 (wherever they are, they will not be at ease). If we suppose that Dharmarakṣa misread the initial *śa* of *śāsane* as *ya* (with long vowels typically unmarked in *kharoṣṭhī* script), then it is possible that he understood this clause as *iha yasa* (= *yasya/yasmin*) *na* . . . Such a supposition--and that is all this can be--also accounts for Dharmarakṣa's unexpected negative marker (*bu* 不), which is not represented in the extant Sanskrit or Tibetan. Neither of these two examples are without problems.

³⁴For an edition of Niya 510, see Boyer et al. 1927, 184-85 and also Hasuiké 1997; for Niya 511, see Boyer et al. 1927, 185-87 and Hasuiké 1996; on Niya 523, see Boyer et al. 1927, 191 and Boyer et al. 1918. I have argued elsewhere for the possibility of Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit texts transcribed in *kharoṣṭhī* script; see Boucher 1998, esp. 498-503. For examples of *kharoṣṭhī* manuscript fragments from the Pelliot collection written in Sanskrit, see Salomon 1998b. Mark Allon and Richard Salomon have more recently reported on a partially Sanskritized Gāndhārī version of the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* preserved in the Schøyen collection; see Allon and Salomon 2000.

numerous colophons and indigenous bibliographies that Buddhist translations in China were carried out orally and by committee, often by individuals of very questionable expertise, to put it charitably.³⁵ Although no colophon to Dharmarakṣa's translation of the *Rāṣṭrapāla* appears to be preserved in our extant records,³⁶ we do have a record of the translation procedures for a text within Dharmarakṣa's corpus, the *Suvikrāntacintidevaputrapariṣcchā*, completed approximately three and a half years prior to his translation of the *Rāṣṭrapāla*. The intrinsic interest of this colophon and the possible light it may shed on the only slightly later translation of the *Rāṣṭrapāla* merit its citation in full:

Xuzhen tianzi jing 須真天子經 [*Suvikrāntacintidevaputrapariṣcchā*]: On the eighth day of the eleventh month of the second year of the *Taishi*³⁷ reign period [= December 21, 266], in the White Horse Monastery (*baima si* 白馬寺)³⁸ inside the Azure Gate in Chang'an, the Indian³⁹ bodhisattva Dharmarakṣa (*tanmoluocho* 曇摩羅叉) orally conferred and issued it (*kou shou chu zhi* 口授出之).⁴⁰ At that time the ones who transferred the words (*chuan yanzhe* 傳言者) were An Wenhui and Bo Yuanxin. The ones who took it down in writing⁴¹ were Nie Chengyuan, Zhang Xuanbo, and Sun Xiuda.⁴² It was completed on the thirtieth day of the twelfth month [= February 11, 267] during the second watch of the afternoon

³⁵On the translation process in China, see Fuchs 1930; Ch'en 1960; Tso 1963; and Boucher 1996, esp. 62-102.

³⁶We have only a brief record within Sengyou's list of Dharmarakṣa's translations noting the title and translation date of the *Rāṣṭrapāla*; see *Chu sanzang ji ji*, 出三藏記集 [*Collection of Notices on the Translation of the Tripiṭaka*, hereafter CSZJJ] (T 2145) 55.7c. The date for the completion of the translation is recorded as the sixth year of the *Taishi* reign period, ninth month, thirtieth day (=October 31, 270).

³⁷The text reads *taishi* 太始 here for *taishi* 泰始, a reign period encompassing the years 265-274 CE.

³⁸Tokiwa 1938, 611 assumes that this record is mistaken, having confused some monastery in Chang'an with the famous *Baima si* of Luoyang. I have difficulty, however, in finding anything approaching an explanation in his remarks. I see no reason why a monastery in Chang'an could not have been named after the famous translation center of Han Buddhism, especially if it too served as a regular site for Dharmarakṣa's translation work.

³⁹This is the only colophon to my knowledge that identifies Dharmarakṣa as an Indian. All other sources regard him as Yuezhi. We might expect that his ethnicon *zhu* 竺, adopted from that of his teacher, could have led to such a confusion, but his Indian monastic name is here transcribed without the use of the ethnicon.

⁴⁰It is difficult to know exactly how to take *ch'u* 出 here; for a more detailed discussion of the significance of *chu* in these colophons, see Boucher 1996, 89-94 and Boucher 1998, 487, n. 73.

⁴¹The text reads here *shou shou* 手受, but this almost certainly must be a mistake for *bishou* 筆受 which occurs throughout Dharmarakṣa's colophons to designate those who wrote down the oral translation.

(*weisbi* 未時 = 2-4 p.m.).⁴³

There are several points with regard to this colophon that deserve to be highlighted. First, Dharmarakṣa is described as “orally conferring and issuing” the Indian text. The record does not tell us whether he held an actual manuscript in his hands or recited the text from memory.⁴⁴ What the colophon does emphasize, however, is that Dharmarakṣa is the principal translator precisely because he is able to recite the text from its Indic script--to draw it out of its foreign guise and into a form that can be transformed into literary Chinese. It does not--and this is an important point here--tell us that Dharmarakṣa translated the text himself, at least not in the sense we speak of “translation” today. In fact, the colophon is explicit in naming two collaborators, the Parthian An Wenhui and the Kuchean Bo Yuanxin,⁴⁵ as those who “transferred the words.” That is to say, it seems almost certain that it is they who listened to Dharmarakṣa’s recitation of the Indic text and converted their understanding of his recitation into vernacular Chinese, presumably while conferring with Dharmarakṣa concerning the precise meaning of many words and phrases. These are the individuals, then, who we would normally take to be the real translators.⁴⁶ Finally, the colophon tells us that three individuals, all presumably native Chinese, shared in the task of “taking down with the brush” the oral rendering of the bilingual intermediaries. This must have involved some kind of conversion of the oral draft translation of the Parthian and Kuchean assistant into the semi-literary text that has come down to us. It may also be the case that these scribes would have contributed in important ways to the substance of the translation, both in their own limited apprehensions of Dharmarakṣa’s recitation of the Indic text as well as by

⁴²In a separate notice to Sengyou’s list of Dharmarakṣa’s translation corpus (*CSZJJ*, 55.9c.9-11), An Wenhui and Bo Yuanxin are described as “receiving [the text] with the brush” (*bishou* 筆受), not as those “who transfer the words”; no mention is made of the three scribes of this colophon. Given the apparent incompleteness of this separate notice in comparison to the colophon translated here, it seems preferable to accept the reading of the colophon.

⁴³*CSZJJ*, 55.48b.22-26.

⁴⁴Colophons to other translations, for example to those of the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka-sūtra*, the *Avaiṣṭikacakra-sūtra*, and *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra*, state explicitly that Dharmarakṣa held an Indic text in his hands and conferred a recitation of it upon a scribal assistant. For a translation of these colophons see Boucher 1996, 65-88. Though it can not be proven in the case of the *Suvikrāntacintidevaputrāparipṛcchā-sūtra*, I presume that here too Dharmarakṣa worked from an actual Indic manuscript.

⁴⁵The Kuchean layman Bo Yuanxin would continue to be an active participant on Dharmarakṣa’s translation committees. He is named, for instance, as one of the collators of the finished translation of the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka-sūtra*; on this colophon, see Boucher 1998, 485-89.

interpolating native Chinese understandings of Buddhist technical terms.⁴⁷

Given that the *Suvikrāntacintidevaputrapariṣcchā-sūtra* was translated very close in time to the *Rāṣṭrapāla*, we have good reason to believe that the circumstances of translation would not have been dissimilar. If that is so, then we may be in better position to understand the source of some of the translation confusions we encountered above in the final product of these committees. We can assert with considerable confidence, for instance, that the confusions between *akṣaras* with close graphic similarity in the *kharoṣṭhī* script can only be due to misreadings by Dharmarakṣa, who, we have reason to believe, would have been principally responsible for the reading of the Indian manuscript and its recitation to the bilingual intermediaries who collaborated with him. That such mistakes remained in the finished work--as they did in subsequent translations for years to come--suggests that no member of the translation team was in a position to check both the Indian text and the literary rendering of the Chinese scribes. In fact, colophons to other translations appear to indicate that Dharmarakṣa's skills in Chinese would remain questionable for many years to come, necessitating his reliance on translation assistants from India, Central Asia, and China.⁴⁸

There is also evidence that some of the translation anomalies could have resulted from mishearings of Dharmarakṣa's recitation of the Indic text by his collaborators. Consider the following verse, the first in Dharmarakṣa's translation:

Finot 8.14-15: *bodhisattvacaryā suniścītā tattvato bhavati yo 'sya sambhavaḥ /*
jñānasāgarakathā vinīścayaṃ bhāṣatām mama jīno narottamā //
 (May the Victorious One, the Most Excellent of Men, relate to me a disquisition, a narrative containing an ocean of knowledge, on the well-determined bodhisattva career which has its origin in truth.)

⁴⁶The fact that the Chinese translations are nearly always attributed to one, usually foreign, translator, in our case Dharmarakṣa, and not to members of his committee has more to do with concerns for legitimation and orthodoxy in China than with historical accuracy. Antonino Forte has astutely observed: "The assignment of the responsibility for a translation was an extremely important matter as its purpose was to reassure the Buddhist establishment and the government of the full authenticity and orthodoxy of a work. This need to make one person responsible often meant that the actual contribution of other members of the team tended to be unacknowledged. The paradox thus often arose of the accredited translator, usually a foreigner, being unable to speak or write Chinese, while the actual translators received so little attention that, but for the colophons at the end of a number of translations, we would often not have even known their names" (Forte 1984, 316).

⁴⁷For examples of both kinds of scribal intrusions, including some from the *Suvikrāntacintidevaputrapariṣcchā-sūtra*, see Boucher 1998, esp. 489 and 497-98.

⁴⁸On the development of Dharmarakṣa's linguistic skills as evidenced by our extant colophons and prefaces to his translations, see Boucher 1996, esp. 88-102.

Dh 412a.19-20: 云何菩薩滿所行 何謂所作而審諦
 具足智慧功德願 今人中尊解說是
 (How does the bodhisattva fulfill the practice, which is [well] accomplished and fully known, replete with wisdom and meritorious aspirations? [May] the most honored among men today explain it.)

Obviously, Dharmarakṣa's translation of this verse departs in manifold ways from our extant Sanskrit text. The single term I would like to highlight here, however, is Dharmarakṣa's rendering of *-sāgara* (ocean) as *juzu* 具足 (accomplished, replete). To explain this incongruity, at least two translation scenarios are possible. First, if Dharmarakṣa's Indic manuscript was indeed written in *kharoṣṭhī* script as seems likely, then we might expect that this same manuscript would have been transcribed--although not necessarily composed--in a Gāndhārī Prākṛit-using environment. Under such circumstances, Dharmarakṣa's Indic text could have had *-saghara* in place of *-sāgara*, reflecting the weakening of the distinction between aspirated and unaspirated intervocalic consonants in Gāndhārī Prākṛit, not to mention the general loss of marked long vowels.⁴⁹ The word *saghara* is well attested in the Khotan *Dharmapada* as an equivalent for *saṃskāra*.⁵⁰ And we know from elsewhere in the translation of the *Rāṣṭrapāla* that Dharmarakṣa's team used *juzu* to render *saṃskṛta*, *saṃskāra* (completed, accomplishment).⁵¹ It is also possible that the Indic manuscript had, in fact, our attested *-sāgara*, but that the translation assistants misheard Dharmarakṣa's recitation of the word as the Gāndhārī *-saghara* (= *saṃskāra*) and conveyed such an understanding to the Chinese scribes. This would have been especially understandable if these translation assistants had encountered the word *sagara/saghara* in other contexts with the meaning of *saṃskāra*. At the very least we can appreciate the difficulties encountered by these early translators as they attempted to decipher texts reflecting an already mixed linguistic heritage, in all probability composed, transcribed, and translated across multiple regions using different hybrids of Middle Indo-Aryan and Sanskrit languages.

If we have seen ways in which oral/aural confusions could have crept into the

⁴⁹The loss of this distinction between aspirated and unaspirated consonants, especially common in the cases of *g/gh* and *d/dh*, may have been due to the influence of Iranian speakers neighboring Gāndhārī-using regions; see Konow 1929, ci-cii and Brough 1962, 100-101. We have no way to determine, however, the degree to which non-native readers of Gāndhārī texts would have been aware of these orthographic habits.

⁵⁰See Brough 1962, vv. 10, 70, 106, 107, 163, and 181; for the form *sagara* = *saṃskāra*, see v. 303.

⁵¹Cf. 4.413a.3: 種種具足審寂寞 corresponding to Finot 16.13: *vicaratisaṃskṛta sarva māyabhūtam* ("he considers all compounded things as like illusions").

finished translation, we should also consider the possibility that the Chinese scribes might have attempted to accommodate third-century Chinese sensibilities from their end. This would be all the more likely given that these scribes were ultimately responsible for the shape of the literary Chinese text, as indicated in the colophons. One example of a culturally responsive translation that occurs repeatedly in Dharmarakṣa's translation of the *Rāṣṭrapāla* is the binome *xianju* 閑居 ("dwelling idly") within passages calling for bodhisattvas to dwell in the wilderness (*aranya*).⁵² Although this binome is not unique to Dharmarakṣa's translations, being known already from his predecessors, it is clear from the Chinese side that the expression *xianju* has strong associations with the antinomian reclusion so often praised in the poems and essays of such third-century literati as Xi Kang, Ruan Ji, and other members of the famous Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove.⁵³ For example, in Xi Kang's poem *Youfen shi* 幽憤詩 ("Resentment"), we find the following line: 仰慕嚴鄭樂道閑居 ("Exalting Yan [Junping] and Zheng [Zizhen], who, taking pleasure in the Dao, live tranquilly").⁵⁴ And while such a translation would have effectively resonated with an interested Chinese reader of the late third century, it is doubtful that it would have equally conveyed the sense intended by the Indian text. In this regard the cultural gulf between the kind of forest asceticism espoused by some early Indian Mahāyāna sūtras and the carefree wandering exalted by some Chinese literati of the Wei-Jin period (3rd-4th cents.) was lost to the Chinese scribal assistants. The author of the *Rāṣṭrapāla* was engaged in an often ascerbic critique of his monastic contemporaries, monks who were more interested in fawning over donors than in cultivating the path toward enlightenment. Put another way, this author, and others like him, were arguing for essentially conservative values, a return to the stricter--and in their opinion, original--path laid out by the Buddha.⁵⁵ The Chinese literatus, on the other hand, pines not just for a

⁵²Examples include the following: 412c.4-5: 習閑居野處 (habituated to quiet living in the wilderness) = Finot 13.17: *aranyavāsān utsarjanatā* (not abandoning residence in the forest); 412c.14: 樂在閑居 (takes pleasure in quiet living) = Finot 15.10-11: *aranyavāsaḥ* (dwelling in the forest); 412c.22: 閑居寂寞無所起 (dwelling quietly, tranquil and alone, without origination [?]) = Finot 16.3: *aranyavividhaprānta sevamāno* (inhabiting the manifold border regions in the wilderness); 413c.19: 在閑居 (dwells in a quiet place) = Finot 35.17: *'ranyam upeti* (he enters the forest); etc.

⁵³On the literary figures of the Seven Sages of the Bamboo grove generally, see Holzman 1956; for the essays of Xi Kang, see Hendricks 1983; on Ruan Ji, see Holzman 1976, esp. 110-36 for poems challenging conventional values in favor of a life of carefree wandering.

⁵⁴*Zhaoming wenxuan* (juan 23), 315. I have also benefitted from HANAFUSA Eiju's Japanese translation (1974), 380-82. Yan Junping was a Han literatus from the state of Shu who studied the works of Yang Xiong and practiced divination; he is the author of the *Laozi zhihui* 老子指揮 (*The Commands of Laozi*); see Morohashi 4589.278. Zheng Zizhen held an official post under Emperor Cheng of the Han (r. 33-6 BCE) and was famous for cultivating the Dao by maintaining tranquility; see Morohashi 39647.404.

simpler life, but one free of conventional mores. In fact, an open disregard for traditional norms of behavior became a virtual *sine qua non* among the most prominent figures of this movement. By using *xianju* to refer to forest asceticism, the Chinese scribes on Dharmarakṣa's translation committee aligned, perhaps only subtly, the *Rāṣṭrapāla* with this third-century rhetoric. What would have been a call to the intense discipline of the homeless ascetic to an Indian reader is in the Chinese text made to look like the free and easy wandering of the *Zhuangzi*, the Daoist classic that was read with great gusto during this period.

Conclusion

My discussion here merely adumbrates the richness of both the content of the *Rāṣṭrapāla* for our understanding of early Mahāyāna Buddhism and the promise of its early Chinese translation for uncovering its textual history. My fuller study and translation will discuss both in greater detail. At the very least, the examples cited above from Dharmarakṣa's translation demonstrate that the complexities of the translation process itself--the recitation of the Indic text, its transfer via bilingual intermediaries, and its reception by Chinese scribes--must all be taken into account if we are to use these documents effectively for the history of early Mahāyāna sūtra literature. It should be clear now that our early Chinese Buddhist translations represent an invaluable and largely untapped repository of data also for advancing our understanding of the scripts and languages involved in the transmission of Buddhism from northwest India through the Tarim Basin, and for the reception of these texts in China during the first few centuries of the Common Era.

⁵⁵That some of early Mahāyāna sūtra literature should be seen as essentially conservative polemic, arguing for a retrenchment of monastic excesses and a return to the rigorous life of the forest, has generally gone unnoticed in most discussions of the early Mahāyāna. A strong case for this view has been made most forcefully by Schopen 1999, esp., 287 ff.

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